

**SYMPOSIUM ON STERILIZATION\***

**1. EUGENIC STERILIZATION IN EUROPE**

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The Eugenic sterilization legislation recently enacted in seven European countries is based upon experience in America and upon findings from surveys and studies in Germany and elsewhere on the hereditary aspects of certain diseases. The compulsory aspect of the European legislation applies usually to physically and mentally defective public charges, who after sterilization operation are permitted to return to community life, while the outward manifestation of hereditary disease brings all persons under the provisions of the law in Germany. The hereditary forms of feeble-mindedness, schizophrenia, manic depressive psychosis, epilepsy, Huntington's chorea, deaf-mutism, blindness, severe bodily malformation and severe alcohol or drug-addiction come under the provisions of the German law.

The Department of Public Health is charged in the name of the commonwealth with the investigation of case and family history, the appointment of the deciding body and the supervision of execution of the provisions of the law. The operative procedures are conservatively limited to a severing, tying or occlusion of the vas deferens or the Fallopian tubes, an operation believed not to interfere with the endocrine balance.

Experience with eugenic sterilization in Europe has been altogether too limited to furnish valid factual data as a basis to discuss the relative merits of voluntary and compulsory sterilization legislation.

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\* A more complete account of this symposium will be published in a later issue of the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*.